

On Providence: Fragment II

Philo of Alexandria



Now he conducts his argument in this way; these are his words.

Having said thus much with respect to the outward circumstances of, and a vast number of other things affecting, these men, he then immediately proceeds to refute the objections of his adversaries by the following arguments.

And there is no form of address with which a king can more appropriately be saluted than the name of father; for what, in human relationships, parents are to their children, that also sovereigns are to their states, and God towards the world, having adapted these two most beautiful things by the unchangeable laws of nature, by an indissoluble union, namely the authority of the leader with the anxious care of a relation;

for as parents are not wholly indifferent to even ill-behaved children, but, having compassion on their unfortunate dispositions, they are careful and anxious for their welfare, looking upon it as an act of relentless and irreconcilable enemies to insult and increase their misfortunes, but as the part of friends and relations to lighten their disasters:

and indeed in the excess of their liberality they even give more to such children than to those who have always been well conducted, knowing well that to these last their own moderation is at all times an abundant resource and means of riches, but that the others have no other hope except in their parents, and that if they are disappointed in that they will be destitute of even the necessities of life.

So in the same manner, God, how is the father of all rational understanding, takes care of all those beings who are endowed with reason, and exercises a providential power for the protection even of those who are living in a blameable manner, giving them at the same time opportunity of correcting their errors, and nevertheless not violating the dictates of his own merciful nature, of which virtue and humanity are the regular attendants, being willing to have their dwelling in the God-created world;

this one argument now, do thou, O my soul, take to thyself, and store up within thyself as a sacred deposit, and this other also as consistent with and in perfect harmony with it. Do not ever be so deceived and wander from the truth to such a degree as to think any wicked man happy, even though he may be richer than Croesus, and more sharp-sighted than Lyceus, and more

powerful than Milo of Crotona, and more beautiful than Ganymede,

Accordingly, such a man, having shown his own daemon, I mean to say his own mind, to be the slave of ten thousand thousand different masters, such as love, appetite, pleasure, fear, pain, folly, intemperance, cowardice, injustice, he can never possibly be happy, even if the multitude, being utterly misled and deprived of their judgment, were to think him so, being corrupted by a double evil, pride and vain opinion, by which souls without ballast must infallibly be tossed about and driven out of their course; for these evils, above all others, injure the chief multitude of mankind.

If, then, fixing the eyes of the mind steadily upon the truth, you should be inclined to contemplate the providence of God as far as the powers of human reason are capable of doing it, then, when you have attained to a closer conception of the true and only good, you will laugh at those things which belong to men which you for some time admired; for what is worse is always honoured in the absence of what is better, as it then usurps its place; but when that which is better appears, then that which is worse retires, and is contented with the second prize.

Therefore, admiring that godlike excellence and beauty, you will by all means perceive that none of the things previously mentioned were by themselves thought worthy of the better portion by God. On which account the mines of silver and gold are the most worthless portion of the earth, which is altogether and wholly unfit for the production of fruits and food;

for abundance of riches is not like food, a thing without which one cannot live. And the one great and manifest test of all these things is hunger, by which it is seen what is in truth really necessary and useful; for a person when oppressed by hunger would gladly give all the treasures in the whole world in exchange for a little food;

but when there is an abundance of necessary things poured out in a plentiful and unlimited supply, and flowing over all the cities of the land, then we, the citizens, indulging luxuriously in the good things provided by nature, are not contented to stop at them alone, but set up satiated insolence as the guide of our lives, and devoting ourselves to the acquisition of silver and gold, and of everything else by which we hope to acquire gain, proceed in everything like blind men, no longer exciting the eyes of our intellect by reason of our

covetousness, so far as to see that riches are but the burden of the earth, and are the cause of continual and uninterrupted war instead of peace.

Our garments are indeed, as some one of the poets says somewhere, "the flower of the sheep;" but with reference to the art displayed in their manufacture, they are the praise of the weavers. And if any one is proud of any glory which he may have acquired, being greatly delighted at his popularity among worthless people, he should know that he also is worthless, for he delights in them.

And let such a man pray to receive purification so as to have the disease of his ears healed, as it is through his ears that his soul is affected with great diseases. Again: let those men who are proud of their personal strength and activity learn not to be high-minded on such an account, looking at countless kinds of both domesticated and wild beasts, which are also endowed with great strength and power; for it is the most absurd thing imaginable for one who is a man to pride himself on the good qualities of beasts, and that too when the beasts themselves are thought of no importance whatever by him.

Again: why should any man in his senses rejoice at beauty of person, which a short period must extinguish before it has flourished for any great length of time, since time always obscures its deceitful prime? and this too, when he sees that even in lifeless things there are objects of surpassing beauty, such as the works of painters, and sculptors, and other artists, displayed in paintings, and statues, and all kinds of embroidery, and weaving, which are held in the greatest honour in Greece and in the countries of the barbarians in every city.

Of these things, then, as I have said, not one is accounted by God worthy of the better portion.

But those who have devoted themselves to a bastard kind of philosophy have not even imitated physicians who give their attention to the body, the slave of the soul, though nevertheless they affirm that they are healing the mistress, that is to say, the soul itself; for then, when any such man is sick, even if he be the great king himself, passing over all the colonnades, and the men's chambers, and the women's chambers, and the pictures, and the silver and the gold, whether in money or in bullion, and the vast treasures of cups and works of embroidery, and all the rest of the celebrated ornaments of kings, and the multitude of his servants, and of his friends, or relatives, and subjects, and the

chief officers who are about his person, and his body-guards, they come up to his bedside, paying no attention even to the decorations of his person, and not stopping to notice with admiration that his bed is inlaid with precious stones, or that his coverlet is of the finest workmanship and the most exquisite embroidery, nor that the fashion of his garments is of superlative beauty, but they even pull off the clothes in which he is wrapped, and lay hold of his hands, and press his veins, and feel his pulse, and note its beating accurately to see if it is in a healthy condition; very often too, they pull up his tunic and feel whether his stomach is too full, whether his chest is feverish, whether his heart beats irregularly. And then, when they have ascertained the symptoms, they apply the appropriate remedies.

And in like manner, it would become philosophers who profess to be versed in the healing science as applicable to the soul, which is by nature the dominant part of the man, to despise all the things which erroneous opinion raises up as objects of pride, and to penetrate within, and to lay their hands upon the intellect itself, to see whether through passion its pulses are of an uneven rapidity and moving in an irregular and unnatural manner, and to touch the tongue, and see whether it is rough and devoted to evil-speaking, whether it is prostituted to evil purposes and unmanageable; also to touch the belly, and see whether it is swollen with the insatiable characteristics of desire, and, in short, of any other passions, and diseases, and infirmities, and to examine every one of those feelings, if they appear to be in a state of confusion, so that they may not be ignorant of what is proper to be applied to the soul with a reference to its cure.

But now being lightened up all round by the brilliancy of external things, as being unable to see that light which is perceptible only by the intellect, they have passed their whole existence in a state of error, not being able to penetrate as far as royal thought, but being with difficulty able to reach the outer courts, and admiring those servants who stand at the gates of virtue, wealth, and glory, and health, and other kindred circumstances, they fall down in adoration before them.

But as it would be an extravagance of insanity to take blind men for judges of colour, or deaf men as judges of the sounds of music, so it is a most preposterous act to take wicked men as judges of real good. For these men are mutilated in the most important parts of themselves, namely, their intellect,

over which folly has shed a deep darkness.

Do we then now wonder if Socrates, and such and such a virtuous man, has lived in purity? men who have never once studied any of the means of providing themselves with pecuniary resources, and who have never, even when it was in their power, condescended to accept great gifts which have been tendered to their acceptance by wealthy friends or mighty kings, because they looked upon the acquisition of virtue as the only good, the only beautiful thing, and have therefore laboured at that, and disregarded all other good things.

And who is there who would not disregard spurious good things in comparison of genuine ones? But if while they received a mortal body, and were full of liability to all kinds of human disasters, and lived among such a number of unjust actions and unrighteous men, of which the very number is not easy to compute accurately, they were plotted against by their enemies, why do we blame nature when we ought rather to accuse the barbarity of those who thus set upon them?

For so in like manner, if they had been placed in a pestilential climate, they would inevitably have become sick; and wickedness is even more, or at all events not less, destructive than a pestilential state of the atmosphere. But as when there is rain the wise man, if he is in the open air, must inevitably get wet through, and if the cold north wind blows he must be oppressed by cold and shivering, and when summer is at its height he must feel the heat, for it is a law of nature that the bodies of men should be simultaneously affected by the changes of the seasons; so also in the same way a man who lives in such places,

Since in the case of Polycrates at least, in retaliation for the terrible acts of injustice and impiety which he committed, there fell upon him great misery in his subsequent life as a terrible requital for his previous good fortune. Add to this that he was chastised by a mighty sovereign, and was crucified by him, fulfilling the prediction of the oracle: "I knew," said he, "long before I took it into my head to go to consult the oracle, that I was anointed by the sun and washed by Jupiter," for these enigmatical assertions, expressed in symbolical language having been originally couched in unintelligible language, afterwards receive a most manifest confirmation by the events which followed them.

But it was not only at the end of his existence, but indeed during the whole period of his life from its earliest commencement that he was, though without being aware of it, making his soul to depend wholly on his body; for as he was always in a state of alarm and trepidation, he feared the multitude of enemies who might possibly attack him, being well assured that no one in the world was really well affected towards him, but that every one was hostile to him, and would turn out implacable enemies if he should be unfortunate.

Again, if unsuccessful and yet of neverending precautions those writers who have written the history of Sicily are witnesses, for they say that the tyrant of Sicily suspected even his most affectionately loved wife; and a proof of this is that he ordered the entrance of his chamber by which she was about to have access to him to be strewed with planks, in order that she might never come upon him without being observed, but that the noise and tumult made by her stepping on these boards might indicate her approach beforehand; and besides this he compelled her to come not only without her robe, but even naked in every part, and even in those which ought not to be seen by men. And in addition to this he ordered the whole of the flooring along the road to be cut in width and depth like a trench made by farmers, out of fear lest anything should be secretly concealed so as to plot against him, which would inevitably be detected by the leaps and long steps which a person coming along this path would be compelled to take.

Of how many miseries, then, was that man full who took all these precautions and practised all these contrivances against his own wife, whom he ought to have trusted above all other human beings? But he was like those men who scale precipices and climb over abrupt and steep mountains for the purpose of attaining to a more accurate comprehension of the natures of things in heaven, who at last after they have with great difficulty ascended to some overhanging ridge, find themselves unable to advance any further as they are too much exhausted to think of attempting the remaining portion of the mountain, and also want courage to descend, being giddy at the sight of the chasms and ravines below them;

for he, being in love with sovereign power as a godlike thing to be desired above all other objects, looked upon it as unsafe either to remain where he was or to retreat, for he considered that if he remained where he was innumerable other evils would come upon him in rapid and uninterrupted succession,

while if he decided on retracing his steps his very life would be in danger, as there were enemies around, if not as to their bodies at all events in their minds, against him.

And he also showed the truth of all this by the treatment to which he exposed a friend of his who spoke of the life of a tyrant as one of complete and absolute happiness; for, having invited him to a banquet which had been prepared in a most brilliant and costly manner, he ordered a sharp sword to be suspended over his head by a very fine thread, and when he, after he had sat down to the banquet, on a sudden perceived it, not daring to rise up and quit his place for fear of the tyrant, and not being able to enjoy any of the things which were prepared out of fear, he disregarded all the abundant and superb luxuries by which he was surrounded, and keeping his neck and his eyes turned upwards, sat in the expectation of instant Death. (horace alludes to the story of Damocles, Od. III. 1.16 (which may be translated)— “Care murders sleep; the man who’s learnt to dread / The sword unsafely trembling o’er his head, / In vain to court his sad distracted taste / The table groans beneath the varied feast. / Sad Philomel’s untutored song is vain, / And vain the swelling flute’s more laboured strain, / To close his eyes in sleep, the envied lot / Of weary peasant in his humbler cot.”)

And when Dionysius perceived the state in which he as, he said to him, “Do you then at last begin to understand the true character of that illustrious and enviable life of ours, for this is what it really is if a man chooses to speak of it without flattery or disguise, since it contains indeed a great abundance of resources and supplies, but no enjoyment of any real blessing; and it causes its possessor incessant fears and irremediable and unavoidable dangers, and a disease worse than the most contagious or most fatal sickness, which is continually threatening inevitable death.

But the inconsiderate multitude, being deceived by the outward brilliancy and splendour of the position, are like people who are attracted by showy looking courtesans, who, concealing their real deformity under fine clothes and golden ornaments, and pencilling their eyes from want of any real beauty, manufacture a spurious beauty in order to lie in wait for and catch the beholders.

Now men who are placed in situations of great prosperity are full of such unhappiness as this, of the greatness of which they themselves are fully aware, and they do not at all keep it to themselves, but like men who under compulsion divulge secret things, they often utter the truest possible expressions, which are extorted from them by suffering, living in the continual company of punishment both present and expected, just like cattle who are being fattened up for sacrifice, for they too are treated with the greatest possible attention in order to be fit to be sacrificed by reason of their fleshiness and good condition.

There are also some men who have suffered punishment, and that not concealed, but visible, and notorious for the impiety of the means by which they have acquired riches, the names and numbers of whom it would be superfluous to enumerate, but it will be sufficient to bring forward one instance as a specimen of the whole.

For it must be the mere spirit of obstinacy and arguing to say that all these events took place by mere chance, for if indeed one or two of them had been punished at different periods or by some other mode of punishment, then it would have been reasonable to impute their fate to the uncertainty of fortune, but when they all died together and at one time, and by no other punishment but by that precise end which is appointed in the laws for the punishment of such crimes as those of which they had been guilty, it is surely fair to say that they perished by the direct condemnation of God.

But if any of the violent men who are unmentioned, and who have at different times risen up against the people in their several states, and have enslaved not only other nations, but their own countries too, have still died without meeting with punishment, it is not to be wondered at, for in the first place man does not judge as God judges, because we investigate what is visible to ourselves, but he descends into the secret recesses of the soul without making any noise, and there contemplates the mind in the clear light, as if in the sun; for stripping off from it all the ornaments in which it is enveloped, and seeing its devices and intentions naked, he immediately distinguishes between the bad and the good.

Let not us then, preferring our own judgment to that of God, assert that it is more unerring or more full of wisdom than his, for that is not consistent

with holiness; for in the one there are many things which deceive it, such as the treacherous outward senses, the insidious character of the passions, the most terrible attacks of vice, but in the other there is nothing which can at all conduce to deceit or error, but justice and truth, by which each separate action is determined on, and in this way is naturally rectified in the most praiseworthy manner.

Do not thou, then, my good friend, consider tyrannical power, that most unprofitable of all things, to be a seasonable possession; for neither is punishment disadvantageous, but it is either more beneficial, or at all events not injurious to the good to suffer due punishment, on which account it is expressly comprehended in all laws which are wisely enacted, and those who have established such laws are praised by every one; for what a tyrant is in a people, that is punishment in a law.

When therefore a want and terrible scarcity of virtue seizes upon cities, and when a great abundance of folly overwhelms everything, then God, like the stream of an overflowing torrent, being desirous to wash away all the power and impetuosity of wickedness, in order to purify our race, gives vigour and power to those men who by their natures are fitted to exercise dominion,

for without a stern soul wickedness cannot be got rid of. And just as cities keep executioners for the punishment of murderers, and traitors, and sacrilegious persons, not because they approve of the dispositions of the men, but because they have need of the serviceable part of their ministrations; in the same manner the Ruler of this mighty city, the world, appoints tyrants, like ordinary executioners, to be over those cities in which he sees that violence, and injustice, and impiety prevail, and all other kinds of evils in abundance, that he may by these means put an end to their existence.

And then he thinks it right to pursue the guilty, as men who have been serving these vices from the impulses of an impure and pitiless soul, with every punishment imaginable, as the ringleaders; for as the power of fire when it has consumed the fuel which was given to it, at last consumes itself also, so also do those who have received supreme power over nations, when they have exhausted the cities and rendered them destitute of inhabitants, at last perish themselves among them, suffering due punishment for all that they have done.

And why should we wonder if God employs the agency of tyrants to get rid of wickedness when widely diffused over cities, and countries, and nations? For he very often uses other ministers, and himself brings about the same end by his own resources, inflicting upon the nation famine, or pestilence, or earthquakes, or any other heaven-sent calamity, by which great and numerous multitudes perish every day, and by which a great portion of the habitable world is made desolate, on account of his care for the preservation of virtue.

Therefore I have now, as I conceive, spoken at sufficient length on the present subject, namely, that no wicked man is happy, by which fact above all others it may be established that there is such a thing as providence; but if you are not thoroughly convinced, then tell me boldly what is the doubt which is still lurking in your mind, for then both of us by labouring together shall be able to see clearly what the real truth is.

And after some more arguments, he proceeds thus: —

And if at times these things do injure those who put to sea or who till the land at unseasonable moments, it is not to be wondered at, for these men are but a small portion of the human race, and the care of God is exerted for the benefit of all mankind.

Therefore He, being aware that the occasional interchanges of the elements with one another, out of which the world was made, and of which it consists, are a work of the greatest importance and necessity, supplies them without allowing anything to be an obstacle to them; and frost and snow-storms, and other things of that kind, follow the cooling of the air. And, again, lightnings and thunders arise from the collision and repercussion of the clouds, none of which things are perhaps effected by any immediate exertion of providence, but the rains and winds are the causes of existence, and nourishment, and growth to all things which are upon the earth, and these phenomena are the natural consequences of those others.

For just as it often happens, when the master of a gymnastic school, out of rivalry, has gone to extravagant expense, then some of those who are ignorant of all that is becoming, having been bespattered with oil instead of water, let all the drops from them fall upon the boards, and then a most slippery mud is the result: nevertheless a man, whose appreciations were just would not say that the hard and the slippery state of the ground was caused by the intention of

the master of the school, but that these things had resulted accidentally, in consequence of the abundant quantity of the things supplied.

Again, the rainbow, and the halo, and all other things of that kind, are natural consequences of those things becoming mingled with the clouds, not being occurrences which lead and influence nature, but being the results and consequences of the operations of nature.

Do you not see that porticoes which embellish the cities? the greater part of these look towards the south, in order that those who walk under them may be warm in the winter, and may be cool in the summer.

And again, fire is a most important work of nature, but the consequence of fire is smoke, and nevertheless even this too at times is of some service. At all events in the heat, in the middle of the day, when the fire is rendered invisible by the brilliancy of the beams of the sun, the approach of enemies is indicated by the smoke,

and the principle which causes the rainbow is also the same which, in some degree, regulates eclipses.

And the circle of the Milky Way partakes of the same natural essences with the other stars; but merely the fact that it is hard to account for, is no reason that those who are accustomed to investigate the principles of nature should shrink from examining into it; for the discovery of those things is most beneficial, and the investigation of them is intrinsically most delightful for its own sake, to those who are fond of learning.

For as the sun and moon exist in consequence of Providence, so also do all things in heaven, even though we are unable to trace out accurately the respective natures and powers of each, and are, therefore, reduced to silence about them;

and earthquakes, and pestilences, and the fall of thunderbolts, and things of that kind, are said indeed to be sent by God, but, in reality, they are not so, for God is absolutely not the cause of any evil whatever of any kind, but the natural changes of the elements produce these effects, not as circumstances which guide nature, but as those which are followed by necessary results, and which do themselves follow naturally upon their antecedent causes.

And if some people, who think themselves entitled to immunity meet with some injury from these things, they are still not to find fault with their management and dispensation; for, in the first place, it does not follow, that if some persons are reckoned virtuous among men, they are so in real truth; since the criteria by which God judges are far more accurate than any of the tests by which the human mind is guided. And, in the second place, prophetic wisdom loves to contemplate those things in the world which are of the most comprehensive nature, as in the case of monarchies, and in the governments of armies, we see that it is not any obscure, ignoble, or chance person who is appointed to govern the cities or the armies.

And some persons say that as on occasion of the slaying of tyrants, it is lawful that their relations also should be put to death, in order that transgressions may be checked by the terrible magnitude of the punishment inflicted: in like manner in pestilential diseases, it is necessary that some of those who are not guilty should be involved in the destruction, in order that others who are at a distance may learn moderation. Besides that, it is inevitable that those who are exposed to a pestilential atmosphere must become diseased just as all persons who are exposed to a storm on board a ship must be all exposed to equal danger.

But those wild beasts which are courageous have been created; for we must not suppress the truth (as if one were to anticipate the defence likely to be made by a man of powerful eloquence and tare it to pieces beforehand), in order that men may, by practising against them, acquire hardihood for the contests of war; for gymnastic exercises and continued hunting train men and inure their souls in a greater degree even than their bodies to rely upon their own courage, and energy, and strength, so as to disregard the sudden attacks of their enemies.

But those men who are of peaceable character are at liberty to keep themselves not only within their walls, but also even within tents, and there to live in privacy, safe from the designs of any enemies, having vast and countless herds of domestic animals to help their enjoyment; since boars and lions, and animals of that kind, are by their own instinct driven to a distance from cities, not being inclined to expose themselves to danger in consequence of the devices of men.

And if any men, being influenced by a spirit of laziness and indolence, living without arms and without preparation, dwell fearlessly among the haunts of wild beasts, then if anything happens to them they must blame not nature but themselves, because when they might have guarded against any such disasters, they have neglected them. Accordingly, before now, I have seen at the horse-races some persons acting in a most careless manner, who, when they ought to have sat still and to have beheld the races in an orderly manner, standing in the middle have been knocked down by the horses' feet and by the wheels, and have met with a proper reward for their folly.

We have now, then, said enough on this subject.

And I have also heard two accounts given of them as having been created for the advantage of mankind, which I should not think it well to conceal. Now one of them is the following.

The other account has no reference to the practice of physicians, but only as it would seem to the studies of philosophers. For it says that all these things have been prepared by God as engines of punishment against offenders, just as generals and rulers prepare halters and chains. On which account, though they are quiet at other times, they are brought out with great power in the case of people who have been condemned, and whom nature in her incorruptible tribunal has sentenced to death;

for that they lurk in secret holes and in houses, is a falsehood; for it is seen that these creatures flee out of the cities into the fields and into desert places, to avoid man as their master. Not but what, if this is true, there is a certain sense and principle in it; for rubbish is heaped up in recesses: and quantities of sweepings, and refuse, and such things, are what venomous reptiles love to lurk in, besides the fact that their smell has an attractive power over them.

Again, if swallows live among us, it is not at all strange, for we abstain from hunting them; and a desire of safety is implanted not only in the souls of rational creatures, but also in those of irrational animals.

There is a city of Syria, on the sea shore, Ascalon by name: when I was there, at the time when I was on my journey towards the temple of my native land for the purpose of offering up prayers and sacrifices therein, I saw a most incalculable number of pigeons on the roads and about every house; and when I inquired the cause of their being there in such numbers, they said that it was

not lawful to catch them, for that the use of them had been prohibited to the inhabitants from the earliest ages; and so the bird had become so thoroughly tame through fearlessness, that it not only hovered about the roofs and came into the houses, but approached their tables also, and grew luxurious in the alliance which it had thus formed.

And in Egypt we may see a still more marvellous thing; for the crocodile is the most odious of all animals, and one addicted to devour man; and it is born and brought up in the most sacred way, and although residing in the depths, it feels the benefits which it receives from mankind; for in those tribes, among which it is honoured, it multiplies in the greatest degree, but among those who injure it it never appears at all: so that there are places where even the most timid persons when sailing by leap out of their ships and swim about with their children.

And in the country of the Cyclops, since the race of these men is a fabulous invention, there is no eatable fruit whatever produced except such as is raised from seed and cultivated by husbandmen, just as nothing is produced from that which does not exist; but we must not accuse Greece as being sterile and unproductive, for there is a great deal of deep and rich soil in it; and if the land of the barbarians is superior in fruitfulness, though it is superior in the food which it produces, it is inferior in the men who are nourished by the food, and for whose sake the food is produced.

on which account Heraclitus said with great propriety, "Where the soil is dry, there the soul is most wise and most excellent;" and any one may conjecture this from the fact, that men who are sober and contented with a little are wise, and that those who are continually filling themselves with meat and drink are the least sensible, as if their reasoning faculties were drowned by the quantity which they swallow.

And on this account we see, in the countries of the barbarians, trees and plants grow to the greatest possible size, by reason of the abundance of nourishment which they receive; and we see too, that the irrational animals which are found in these regions are the most prolific of any, but the mind is not so, or, at all events, it is so in a very slight degree, because it is elevated and raised out of the aether itself, while the incessant and uninterrupted evaporations of earth and water have freely boiled over it.

Again, the different kinds of fish, and birds, and terrestrial animals, are not grounds for accusing nature, which invites us to pleasure by those means, but are a terrible reproach to us for our intemperate use of them, for it was necessary, for the due completion of the universe, in order that there should be order and regularity in every portion of it, that there should be produced every possible species of animal. But it was not necessary that that animal, which of all others is most akin to wisdom, namely, man, should rush with such eagerness to the enjoyment of it, as to change his nature into something resembling the ferocity of wild beasts;

on which account, even up to the present time, those who have any regard for temperance entirely abstain from such things, eating only vegetables, and herbs, and the fruits of trees, as the most delicious and wholesome food.

Again, if roses, and crocuses, and all the other beautiful variety of flowers which we see, contribute to health, it would not follow that they all contribute to pleasure; for the indescribable variety of them makes the powers of some of them more conspicuous than those of others, just as there is a commingling of male and female, contributing to the generation of an animal; neither of them being calculated, by itself, to produce the effect which the two produce in combination.

These things are said, in a most convincing manner, with reference to the rest of the questions raised by you, being quite sufficient to produce conviction in the minds of all who are not obstinately contentious on the subject of God taking great care of human Affairs.(yonge's edition includes numerous miscellaneous fragments including From the Parallels of John of Damascus (which includes Greek fragments from Quaestiones in Genesis et Exodum, whose translation is generally based on Armenian), from An Anonymous Collection in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, and from An Unpublished Manuscript in the Library of the French King. These have been relocated to an appendix in this volume.)